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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 000461

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TAGS: PREL IR MU

SUBJECT: OMANI FOREIGN MINISTER ON UPCOMING VISIT OF
IRANIAN PRESIDENT TO MUSCAT

REF: 445 MUSCAT (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo per 1.5 (B and D).

¶1. (C) The principal reasons for the visit of Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadini-Razavi to Muscat are to give the Sultan an opportunity to meet and talk to the president and to discuss "Iran's image in the international community," according to Omani Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusef bin Alawi. Receiving me at his MFA office in the early evening May 11 (Oman's weekend), the Minister indicated that Ahmadini-Razavi's visit to Muscat is now scheduled for Monday, May 14, vice the previously reported Saturday (reftel). (No reason was given for the date change.) The Iranian president's stay is expected to last several hours only.

¶2. (C) Bin Alawi said that because the Iranians listen to and trust the Omanis, the Sultan will explain Oman's perception of Iran's image in the world and what the Iranians can do to rectify it. On this visit, however, the Sultan does not plan to get into details of the nuclear issue or Iran's troublemaking activities in Iraq or elsewhere, although these are obviously part of the problem Iran faces with Arab governments, the U.S., and the rest of the international community, bin Alawi said.

¶3. (C) I referred to the recent visit of Central Command Commander Admiral Fallon, who had explained the dangerous levels of Iranian interference in Iraq, especially Iranian support for both Sunni as well as Shi'a armed factions and extremists and the supply of weapons used to kill U.S. soldiers. Bin Alawi agreed that "things have gotten worse" and said the Omanis will share their "frank views" with the Iranians.

¶4. (C) On the matter of Iran's nuclear program, bin Alawi said he still plans to travel to Tehran on May 17 to discuss "fresh ideas," which have been discussed in some detail with the Swiss. Swiss officials have visited both Muscat and Tehran in the last few weeks, according to bin Alawi. A reportedly "U.S.- and EU-approved paper" was presented to the Iranians recently, and he will follow up on it during his visit. The paper purportedly addresses not only the question of suspension of enrichment and related activities but also what Iran would need to do vis--vis IAEA inspection compliance to eventually resume enrichment at some point down the road. Per bin Alawi, the Iranians have been receptive to this idea, "especially the second part." He also confirmed that he has been talking mainly to Expediency Council Chairman Rafsanjani and SCNS Secretary Ali Larijani on these matters. He repeated that he does not expect the Sultan to get into details of these issues with Ahmadini-Razavi on Monday.

¶5. (C) Bin Alawi will travel from Tehran to London and then to Washington by May 21 and will brief the Secretary on his discussions with the Iranians then. He agreed to see me later this week for a review of the Iranian president's visit.

¶6. (C) Comment: This will be Sultan Qaboos' first meeting ever with the Iranian president. It comes almost 10 months after the GCC proposed that the Omanis approach the Iranians on behalf of the GCC to discuss Tehran's policies in the region and ways to ease tensions. Muscat, which has no significant bilateral issues of concern with the Iranians, never formally responded to the GCC request. The Omanis have used the intervening period -- including through frequent visits of high level officials, telephone conversations and flattering (but non-substantive) public pronouncements -- to further nurture its relations with Iran and reassure its leadership of Omani objectivity. Nevertheless, Omani internal security and military officials remain concerned about Iran's policies and actions and the potential for creating instability throughout the region.

GRAPPO